

When, in 1555, the members objected to the abrogation of laws without right consent, according to old practice, Philip kept them three years waiting for an answer, and then curtly told them that his will was law. " If I please, I shall annul, without the Cortes, the laws made in Cortes. I shall legislate by pragmatic (ordinance), and I shall repeal by pragmatic."

Again, in 1573, when they took to discussing the motion for supply, they were snappishly told that supply was a tribute which they owed the king, and their vote a mere constitutional form. Philip, in fact, raised taxes, in cases of emergency, beyond the sum voted at intervals by the Cortes, and quashed all remonstrance with the plea of necessity.

"The representative institutions of Castile," says Mr Martin Hume, the chief living English authority on modern Spanish history, " had been undermined by Charles, during whose reign the nobles and clergy were excluded from the Cortes. Under Charles and Philip the municipal life of the country, which had been so vigorous, was completely destroyed, the *corregidores* of the towns becoming simply magistrates appointed by the royal authority and subservient to the council of Castile. The town councils had in former times been the basis of parliamentary representation, and with their degradation, and the subsequent corruption introduced, the Cortes became merely an institution for legalising the exactions demanded by the sovereign of the people."

Those of Aragon and Catalonia which were representative of the Three Estates showed, however, more mettle, and obliged Philip, by their staunch resistance to arbitrary tactics, to show some respect for their rights and privileges.

There is no chance of discovering any germs of modern liberty in the Spain of Philip II., who characteristically celebrated his arrival from the Netherlands in October 1559 by an auto-da-fé at Valladolid. His rule was a hideous despotism in Church and State, which blighted the national prosperity and the constitutional institutions of the Spanish people, as well as drove the Spanish Netherlands into revolt. Political and religious liberty were alike stifled. His fanaticism and his egotism effectually suffocated every impulse of progress which Isabella's bigotry, or Ferdinand's craft, or Charles' respect for tradition had allowed to survive. Unfortunately, the sombre religiosity